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# CDC Health Advisory

Distributed via Health Alert Network

September 30, 2005, 19:45 EDT (07:45 PM EDT)

## **Presence of low levels of *Francisella tularensis* in the Washington D.C. area, September 30, 2005**

CDC has become aware that from September 24<sup>th</sup> through September 25<sup>th</sup> environmental air monitors in SW Washington D.C., more specifically the Capitol Mall area, signaled the low level presence of *Francisella tularensis*, the bacterium that causes Tularemia, also known as “rabbit fever.”

**At this time, public health agencies have no reports of any related human or animal illnesses. This announcement is a precautionary measure to assure that clinicians are aware of the situation and are able to recognize, test, and report any suspected cases to the appropriate medical and public health authorities.**

This is a national alert because the Capitol Mall area is a highly-trafficked tourist destination, and on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, was the site of several very well attended outdoor events.

### **Clinical Presentations**

The clinical presentations most likely to occur after an aerosol exposure to *F. tularensis* are pneumonic, oculoglandular and oropharyngeal. The usual incubation period is 3-5 days, but in rare instances can be longer. The disease is not communicable from person to person and can be effectively treated with readily available antimicrobials.

### **Preliminary Case Definition**

Onset from Monday September 26 through October 5 of an acute febrile illness associated with at least one of the following:

- conjunctivitis with preauricular lymphadenopathy (oculoglandular)
- stomatitis or pharyngitis or tonsillitis and cervical lymphadenopathy (oropharyngeal)
- cough, shortness of breath, pleuritic chest pain (pneumonic),

which is not otherwise explained in a resident or visitor to the National Capitol Region on Saturday or Sunday, September 24-25.

### **Human Diagnostic Specimens**

Clinical specimens may include:

- Bronchial/tracheal washes or aspirates, sputum, trans-thoracic lung aspirates, or pleural fluid collection

- Swabs of visible lesions or affected areas (e.g., conjunctiva or pharynx)
- Aspirates from lymph nodes
- Whole blood or blood cultures are acceptable specimens, but are generally positive in cases of severe illness only.

## Laboratory Testing (Culture)

**Microbiology laboratory personnel should be alerted when *F. tularensis* is clinically suspected, so that appropriate laboratory precautions can be taken.**

*F. tularensis* is a fastidious, slow-growing organism that requires cysteine for growth.

*F. tularensis* may be cultured on the following:

- cysteine supplemented agar including chocolate agar (CA)
- cysteine heart agar with 9% chocolate blood (CHAB)
- buffered charcoal yeast extract (BYCE)
- Thayer-Martin agar

Culture plates should be held for 5-7 days at 35-37°C (CO<sub>2</sub> is acceptable) and checked for growth daily.

*F. tularensis* can be isolated from nutrient enriched specimens (tissues) on sheep blood agar (SBA), but the organism will usually fail to thrive with passage on SBA. Growth on CHAB provides for presumptive identification of *F. tularensis* as the organism shows characteristic growth on this media (green, opalescent, raised, shiny colonies at 24-48 hours).

Note: Specimens for recovery of live bacteria, should be collected before antibiotics are administered

## Prophylaxis

CDC does not recommend mass or targeted prophylaxis at this time because:

- the usual incubation period has passed without an increase in suspicious illnesses in the area, and air sampling since September 25<sup>th</sup> has been negative
- infection is readily treatable and generally has a low mortality rate with medical care
- infection cannot be transmitted to others

## Treatment

### Adults

- **Preferred choices:**
  - Streptomycin, 1g IM twice daily
  - Gentamicin, 5 mg/kg IM or IV once daily†
- **Alternative choices:**
  - Doxycycline, 100 mg IV twice daily
  - Ciprofloxacin, 400 mg IV twice daily†

## Children

- **Preferred choices:**
  - Streptomycin, 15 mg/kg IM twice daily (should not exceed 2 gm/d)
  - Gentamicin, 2.5 mg/kg IM or IV 3 times daily†
- **Alternative choices:**
  - Doxycycline,  
If weight  $\geq$  45 kg, 100 mg IV  
If weight  $<$  45 kg, give 2.2 mg/kg IV twice daily
  - Ciprofloxacin, 15 mg/kg IV twice daily‡

## Pregnant Women

- **Preferred choices:**
  - Gentamicin, 5 mg/kg IM or IV once daily†
  - Streptomycin, 1 g IM twice daily
- **Alternative choices:**
  - Doxycycline, 100 mg IV twice daily
  - Ciprofloxacin, 400 mg IV twice daily†

One antibiotic, appropriate for treatment for patient age, should be chosen from among the alternatives. Treatment with streptomycin, gentamicin, or ciprofloxacin should be continued for 10 days; treatment with doxycycline should be continued for 14-21 days. Persons beginning treatment with intramuscular (IM) or intravenous (IV) doxycycline, ciprofloxacin can switch to oral antibiotic administration when clinically indicated.

†Not a U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved use.

‡Ciprofloxacin dosage should not exceed 1 g/d in children.

## Additional information about Tularemia can be found on the CDC website:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/tularemia/>

## DHEC Contact Information for Reportable Diseases and Reporting Requirements

Reporting cases of *Francisella tularensis*, or suspect cases fitting the current preliminary case definition is consistent with South Carolina Law requiring the reporting of diseases and conditions to your state or local public health department. (State Law # 44-29-10 and Regulation # 61-20) as per the DHEC 2004 List of Reportable Conditions available at:  
<http://www.scdhec.net/hs/diseasecont/disease.htm>.

Federal HIPAA legislation allows disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512).

## Public Health Offices

*Mail or call reports to the Epidemiology/Disease Report Office in the appropriate county listed below.*

### Region 1

#### **(Anderson, Oconee)**

220 McGee Road  
Anderson, SC 29625  
Phone: (864) 231-1966  
Fax: (864) 260-5623  
Nights / Weekends: 1-(866)-298-4442

#### **(Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Saluda)**

1736 S. Main Street  
Greenwood, SC 29646  
Phone: 1-888-218-5475  
Fax: (864) 942-3690  
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-420-1915

### Region 2

#### **(Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union)**

P.O. Box 4217  
151 E. Wood Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29305-4217  
Phone: (864) 596-2227 ext. 210  
Fax: (864) 596-3443  
Nights / Weekends: (864) 809-3825

#### **(Greenville, Pickens)**

P.O. Box 2507  
200 University Ridge  
Greenville, SC 29602-2507  
Phone: (864) 282-4139  
Fax: (864) 282-4373  
Nights / Weekends: (864) 460-5355 or  
1-800-993-1186

### Region 3

#### **(Chester, Lancaster, York)**

P.O. Box 817  
1833 Pageland Highway  
Lancaster, SC 29721  
Phone: (803) 286-9948  
Fax: (803) 286-5418  
Nights / Weekends: 1-(866)-867-3886 or  
1-(888)-739-0748

#### **(Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Richland)**

2000 Hampton Street  
Columbia, SC 29204  
Phone: (803) 576-2749  
Fax: (803) 576-2993  
Nights / Weekends: (803) 304-4252

### Region 4

#### **(Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Sumter)**

P.O. Box 1628  
105 North Magnolia Street  
Sumter, SC 29150  
Phone: (803) 773-5511  
Fax: (803) 773-6366  
Nights / Weekends: 1-(877)-831-4647

#### **(Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marlboro, Marion)**

145 E. Cheves Street  
Florence, SC 29506  
Phone: (843) 661-4830  
Fax: (843) 661-4859  
Nights / Weekends: (843) 660-8145

### Region 5

#### **(Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell)**

1680 Richland Avenue, W. Suite 40  
Aiken, SC 29801  
Phone: (803) 642-1618  
Fax: (803) 643-8386  
Nights / Weekends: (803) 827-8668 or  
1-800-614-1519

### Region 5 (cont.)

#### **(Bamberg, Calhoun, Orangeburg)**

P.O. Box 1126  
1550 Carolina Avenue  
Orangeburg, SC 29116  
Phone: (803) 533-7199  
Fax: (803) 536-9118  
Nights / Weekends: (803) 954-8513

### Region 6

#### **(Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg)**

2830 Oak Street  
Conway, SC 29526-4560  
Phone: (843) 365-3126  
Fax: (843) 365-3153  
Nights / Weekends: (843) 381-6710

### Region 7

#### **(Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester)**

4050 Bridge View Drive, Suite 600  
N. Charleston, SC 29405  
Phone: 843-746-3806  
Fax: (843) 746-3851  
Nights / Weekends: (843) 219-8470

### Region 8

#### **(Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper)**

P.O. Box 229  
219 S. Lemacks Street  
Walterboro, SC 29488  
Phone: (843) 525-7603  
Fax: (843) 549-6845  
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-614-4698

### Bureau of Disease Control

Acute Disease Epidemiology Division  
1751 Calhoun Street  
Box 101106  
Columbia, SC  
Phone: (803) 898-0861  
Fax: (803) 898-0897  
Nights / Weekends: 1-888-847-0902

Categories of Health Alert messages:

**Health Alert** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.